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ABSTRACT

Eleven annotations of studies or summaries of studies that are entered in the ERIC system are presented in this leaflet. All the annotations concern principals' behavior characteristics and institutional programs that are related to school success as measured by student achievement. The studies reviewed agree that exemplary principals share a number of characteristics such as being effective problem solvers, taking an active role in school administration, and possessing a human relations orientation. Information for ordering copies of the items reviewed is supplied in the leaflet. (MLF)

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management

The Effective Principal

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The Effective Principal

1 **Benjamin, Robert.** "The Rose in the Forest: A City Principal Who Beats the Odds." *Principal*, 60, 4 (March 1981), pp. 10-15. EJ 243 873.

At Garrison Elementary School in New York City's South Bronx, the students are poor, are either black or Hispanic, and have grown up in a harsh inner-city neighborhood. "But student achievement has always been high at Garrison," says Benjamin, "and it remains so."

Garrison is one of what educational researchers have come to call "mavericks" or "outliers": low-income neighborhood schools with exceptionally high student achievement. In this excellent article, Benjamin describes Garrison's instructional program, interviews Carol Russo, Garrison's dynamic principal, outlines the characteristics of effective principals as identified by recent research on outliers, and discusses ways that the principalship might be revitalized to provide the kind of effective school leadership that is in such short supply today.

Benjamin's description of Russo—her total commitment to student achievement, her ability to get things done through politics, her long hours, her involvement and extensive communication with teachers—is refreshing and inspiring. More impressive still is the intricate educational program Russo has devised. An "encyclopedic range of programs, services, and instructional approaches" is offered at Garrison. Students group and regroup frequently during the day for reading, crossing "grade and class lines to form small clusters with almost every available teacher." Groups meet "in the school's stairwells, on its atticlike top floor, anywhere there's space."

Numerous researchers who have studied maverick schools agree that "as the principal goes, so goes the school." These researchers have identified effective principals as those who take strong initiative in setting school goals, "understand the school's educational program inside out," "spend about half their time in the school's halls and classrooms," "care more about their school's academic progress than human relations," and "set a consistent tone of high expectations for their staff and their students."

2 **Clark, David L.; Lotto, Linda S.; and McCarthy, Martha M.** "Factors Associated with Success in Urban Elementary Schools." *Phi Delta Kappan*, 61, 7 (March 1980), pp. 467-70. EJ 216 077.

Most urban elementary schools have students who perform at very low levels. There are exceptions, however: urban schools do exist in which students exhibit high academic achievement.

The existence of these "mavericks" or "outliers" stimulated Clark, Lotto, and McCarthy to examine closely the evidence accumulated about these schools and to identify the variables that seem to be associated with successful urban elementary schools. They screened over 1,200 studies of urban schools and found 97 (59 case studies and 38 research studies) that provided pertinent information on outliers. In addition, the authors interviewed leading researchers and writers on urban education to determine their ideas on success factors in urban elementary schools.

Strong agreement was found for the idea that "the behavior of the designated school or program leader is crucial in determining school success." Specifically, "effective leaders *did* more; they framed goals and objectives, set standards of performance, created a productive working environment, and obtained needed support."

Little evidence was found for the notion that professional or personal characteristics of leaders had anything to do with school success. What was critically important, though, was "the leader's attitude toward urban education and expectations for school or program success."

Several other factors associated with school success were directly related to administrator behavior. For example, successful schools made frequent use of staff development and inservice training to reach their goals, had programs characterized by clearly stated curriculum goals, and frequently employed techniques of individualized instruction.

3 **Cross, Ray.** "What Makes an Effective Principal?" *Principal*, 60, 4 (March 1981), pp. 19-22. EJ 243 875.

What personal traits or behaviors are characteristic of effective elementary principals? What difference do particular situations make? What criteria should be used to measure principal effectiveness?

If the answers to these questions were known with certainty, says Cross, researchers "could generate a sophisticated cookbook for principal selection and performance." Unfortunately, Cross concludes after a review of available research, "studies on principal effectiveness have not generated enough knowledge to write even the first chapter" of such a book.

Some studies, based on the "somewhat discredited trait theory of leadership," have attempted to correlate personal characteristics of principals—such as age, experience, training, and personality—

Editor's note: For summaries of additional ERIC publications related to this issue's theme, see number 62, *School Effectiveness*, which is available from the Clearinghouse.

with certain principal behaviors or school attributes. These studies consistently show no clear relationship between principals' characteristics and any principal behavior or school attribute.

Studies attempting to relate principal behaviors with school attributes have had more success. For example, two dimensions of leadership style—task orientation and human relations orientation—"were consistently related to positive school organizational climate, teacher morale, and school innovativeness," a finding that supports the intuitive notion that "the principal makes the difference."

But how, then, should principal effectiveness be measured? Cross reminds the reader that "effectiveness, after all, is an artificial construct" that always represents "someone's values and biases." This being the case, principals "should have their own ideas about measures of effectiveness," integrate their ideas with others' expectations, and "develop them into an officially sanctioned basis for performance." "Successful administration requires a tolerance for ambiguity," Cross concludes.

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4 **Gorton, Richard A., and McIntyre, Kenneth E.** *The Senior High School Principalship. Volume II: The Effective Principal.* Reston, Virginia. National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1978. 98 pages. ED 158 440.

In 1977, NASSP conducted a large-scale study of the senior high school principalship. In addition to characterizing the "typical" principal, the researchers conducted indepth interviews with sixty "effective" principals, and the students, teachers, parents, and central-office administrators around them. The information gained from these interviews is summarized in this volume, which describes "the personal characteristics, professional qualities and competencies, and situational conditions which seem to be associated with effective exemplary senior high school principals."

The main factor characterizing this group of principals, say Gorton and McIntyre, is their diversity. Such a finding "would seem to support the situational and contingency models of leadership and cast additional doubt on the notion that there is a single set of personal qualities or a unique leadership style that is effective for all situations."

Despite the range of leadership styles found, however, the researchers were able to identify certain "central tendencies" of effective principals: they are hardworking, dedicated individuals and are "people oriented"; they enjoy strong support from students, teachers, parents, and the district office and retain a reasonable amount of autonomy; and, despite their dedication, most are not planning to stay in the principalship.

The exemplary principals gave strong support to teachers, involved them in important decisions, and maintained "open communications." Communication with students was largely informal in style, with the principal relating with students "in a positive, enthusiastic manner" in a variety of settings.

There was substantial agreement among those interviewed that the exemplary principals were effective problem solvers particularly in the areas of student discipline and extracurricular programs. The principals also saw themselves "as initiators or facilitators of change, but seldom as consultants or evaluators." This excellent report describes numerous other characteristics of the exemplary principals studied and concludes with several recommendations for making the principalship more effective.

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5 **Gretchko, Seymour, and DeMont, Roger A.** "The Principal Makes the Difference." Paper presented at the National School Boards Association annual meeting, San Francisco, April 1980. 11 pages. ED 196 115.

The publication of the Coleman Report in 1966, combined with other events of the 1960s, shattered the notion that schools and their principals "make a difference." "Can't do" replaced "can do" in the vocabulary of educational administrators; "survival" behavior replaced "change agent" behavior as the modus operandi of principals.

Recently, however, state Gretchko and DeMont, research has demonstrated the existence of important and significant relationships between student achievement and key school variables—including principal behavior. A 1977 study, for example, found that in schools with rising student achievement scores, principals regularly spent time in the classroom. Principals in "effective" schools, researchers have found, are greatly interested in curriculum and instructional matters and are committed to working with the staff to improve instruction.

Principals of successful schools also maintain discipline in the school and provide a system of evaluation of both objectives and teacher performance. In addition, principals of successful schools have high expectations for their students and communicate those expectations to students and teachers alike.

From a series of interviews with successful urban principals, Gretchko and DeMont have identified several other characteristics of effective building administrators. The most important are a positive self-image and a pride in the principalship. Successful principals "do not behave as if the principal's role is a way station to the central office, but rather a significant goal in and of itself." Successful principals also genuinely enjoy their relationships with the students in the school, manage their schools with the belief that everyone can and will learn, and have a clearly defined sense of mission and purpose.

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6 **Marcus, Alfred C.; Wellisch, Jean B.; MacQueen, Anne H.; Duck, Gary A.; and Lee, Dean R.** *Administrative Leadership in a Sample of Successful Schools from the National Evaluation of the Emergency School Aid Act.* Santa Monica, California: System Development Corporation, 1976. 37 pages. ED 125 123.

What is the relationship between a school's administrative characteristics and student achievement? To find out, Marcus and his colleagues conducted an indepth study of twenty-four selected elementary schools that had received funds from the Emergency School Aid Act, enacted by Congress in 1972. Fifteen of these schools had been successful in raising student achievement during their first year of funding. The researchers interviewed the principal of each school, administered questionnaires to teachers and principals, and observed each school's functioning for two weeks.

Schools that were successful in raising math scores had principals who gave first priority to, and took more responsibility for, decisions about the selection of basic instructional materials. These successful schools were also characterized by teachers who accurately perceived and agreed with the principal's instructional norms.

There was much less consensus between teachers and principals in other areas, however, such as long-range objectives of the school and priorities of policy development. The authors speculate that agreement on behaviorally specific teaching practices is more important for school success than agreement on long-range objectives, "which are nearly always behaviorally vague. . . . Administrators who advance an educational philosophy in concrete terms, who succeed in communicating this view, and whose concern and energy focus sharply on instruction are those who are more likely to manage successful schools."

The authors present a cross-tabulation of the organizational dimensions they measured and conclude that, in general, "administrative leadership in instruction is strongly associated with success in raising academic achievement."

7 **Mazzarella, Jo Ann.** "Portrait of a Leader." Chapter 1 in *School Leadership: Handbook for Survival,* edited by Stuart C. Smith, Jo Ann Mazzarella, and Philip K. Piele, pp. 17-36. Eugene: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, 1981. ED number not yet assigned.

The volume on school leadership of which this chapter is the first, is based on the assumption that the survival of the public school system depends on effective school leadership. The introduction reviews research showing that "it very much matters what school leaders do, who they are, and how they operate."

This initial chapter focuses on what is known about leaders, and, of most interest to educational administrators, what is known about effective school leaders.

After reviewing research on all kinds of leaders, Mazzarella reports findings about particular kinds of leaders, specifically, effective principals. She highlights studies showing that good principals are people-oriented. One, a study by Keith Goldhammer and his colleagues, looked at principals of outstanding schools and found that principals of good schools had an ability to work effectively with people and to use group processes effectively.

One of the most provocative new studies cited is by Arthur Blumberg and William Greenfield, who looked at characteristics of principals labeled effective by colleagues, teachers, and students. These researchers make a case for a theory of the characteristics of effective leaders that is an updated and refined version of the old trait theory. They found that effective principals, although different in many ways, are alike in a few significant characteristics. They are highly goal-oriented, are not threatened by new ideas, and do not accept rules and customs that get in the way of needed changes.

Effective educational leaders, as portrayed by Mazzarella's summary of the research, are "outgoing, good at working with people, and have good communication abilities and skills. They have initiative, are aware of their goals, and feel secure. As proactive people, they are not afraid to stretch the rules, but also understand the compromises that must be made to get things done."

8 **New York State Office of Education Performance Review.** *School Factors Influencing Reading Achievement: A Case Study of Two Inner City Schools.* Albany: 1974. 89 pages. ED 089 211.

To pinpoint just what school factors influence student achievement, the New York State Office of Education Performance Review studied two inner-city elementary schools—one with low student reading achievement and one with high achievement. The schools were matched on median family income, percentage of families on welfare, pupil ethnicity, percentage of pupils with second language difficulties, percentage of pupils eligible for free lunches, and pupil mobility.

The primary conclusion of this study was that differences in pupils' reading achievement scores in the two schools were attributable to factors under the school's control, specifically administrative policies, behavior, procedures, and practices. Teacher characteristics—such as effectiveness of teaching, training and experience of teachers, appropriateness and availability of materials, and approaches to teaching—did not differ significantly between the schools.

In the successful school (school A), the administrative leadership was characterized by stability: principal A had been there for twelve years and the school ran in a predictable fashion. Instability of administrative leadership characterized school B: the principal here was serving as an interim principal until a permanent building administrator was chosen.

Principal A was not particularly charismatic, but knew how to get things done through people. He built an effective administrative team with diverse skills and permitted team members to participate in decisions.

Instructional leadership in school A was provided by an assistant principal who had an extensive background in reading and elementary education. In school B, there were no "educationally oriented" assistant principals, so that "teachers worked in an intellectual vacuum, programs were fragmentary, and instructional purpose and creativity seemed to wither."

The authors of this enlightening report also discuss several other administrator practices and policies that differed between these two schools.

9 **Shoemaker, Joan, and Fraser, Hugh W.** "What Principals Can Do: Some Implications from Studies of Effective Schooling." *Phi Delta Kappan,* 63, 3 (November 1981), pp. 178-82. EJ number not yet assigned.

"As we move into the Eighties," say Shoemaker and Fraser, "a new belief is gaining credence among educators—schooling does make a difference." The authors here review ten of the studies on which this belief is based, derive from them four implications for effective school leadership, and make recommendations for further research and for modifying current practice.

None of the school effectiveness studies the authors review directly addressed the relationship between the principal's behavior and student achievement; but "most concluded that principals were clearly important in determining the effectiveness of schools." For example, "assertive, achievement-oriented leadership" emerged as one of four characteristics common to effective schools. Instructionally effective principals also appeared to be concerned with good human relations within the school, but "did not allow achievement and evaluation to take second place to good human relations and public relations."

The authors also found that an orderly, purposeful, and peaceful school climate and a well-defined system of instructional objec-

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tives and evaluation were features common to high-achieving schools. But the most consistent finding in the studies reviewed is "the crucial connection between expectations and achievement. Study after study reinforces the fact that students and teachers live up to our expectations of them."

10

Stanchfield, Jo M. "A Place to Stand in Literacy; Or the Principal Can Make a Difference." *Thrust for Educational Leadership*, 6, 2 (November 1976), pp. 22-23, 31. EJ 156 384.

"A concerned principal, involved in curricular activities, can significantly influence the achievement levels of the students" in his or her school. This belief, Stanchfield explains, developed over fourteen years of classroom research on teaching reading skills.

In one study, for example, a program to teach prereading skills was introduced to several schools, and the building administrators in these schools "were asked to lend their active support." As expected, some administrators participated minimally, some participated intermittently, and still others followed the researcher's urgings and became fully involved with the program—visiting classrooms, attending meetings, becoming familiar with materials, and so forth.

At the end of the kindergarten year, the children were given a reading readiness test. Test scores revealed that half of the highest-scoring children "were from schools in which the administrator had been wholeheartedly involved in the program."

The results of this and similar studies, along with observations of administrators in action, have allowed Stanchfield to identify "several roles that effective administrators fill in the performance of their duties." For example, an effective administrator acts as a "developer of an emotional climate for growth." Such actions as being visible, smiling, speaking to teachers and students, and talking about the curriculum activities of the day help engender this kind of positive climate, which, in turn, "has a profound effect upon student achievement." Stanchfield also discusses the effective principal's roles as a stimulator of teachers, a communicator, and a creator of vision.

11

Weber, George. *Inner-City Children Can Be Taught to Read: Four Successful Schools. CBE Occasional Papers, Number 18.* Washington, D.C.: Council for Basic Education, 1971. 41 pages. ED 057 125.

In nearly all inner-city schools, reading achievement in the early grades is very poor. But, as Weber found out, exceptions do exist. He identified four exceptional schools, whose success shows "that the failure in beginning reading typical of inner-city schools is the fault not of the children or their background—but of the schools."

Two of the successful schools Weber found are in Manhattan, one is in Kansas City, and the fourth is in Los Angeles. All are nonselective public schools in the central city attended by very poor children, and each had reading achievement medians in the third grade that equaled or exceeded the national norm.

After studying these four schools, Weber identified eight characteristics they had in common. The first was strong leadership. All four schools had "clearly identifiable individuals who would be regarded as outstanding leaders by most people who are knowledgeable about our public schools." In three schools this individual was the principal, and in the fourth it was the area superintendent. In all four cases, this individual "specifically led the beginning reading program" and made sure it stayed on a productive track.

All four schools also held high expectations for the achievement of the inner-city children in attendance. This expectation, of course, is necessary for success, Weber points out, though it is not sufficient.

Each successful school also had a "good atmosphere," meaning "order, sense of purpose, relative quiet, and pleasure in learning." Other distinguishing characteristics were a strong emphasis on reading, additional reading personnel, use of phonics, individualization, and careful evaluation of pupil progress. Characteristics *not* common to the four schools were small class size, achievement grouping, ethnic background of principals and teachers, quality of teaching, existence of preschool education, and good physical facilities.

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